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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 000729

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/BSC
NSC FOR KIM BREIER
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD DAN JOHNSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2015
TAGS: PGOV PREL PA VE
SUBJECT: PARAGUAY: OVIEDO SEEKS U.S. VIEWS ON MEETING WITH
VENEZUELA

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Keane for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (U) Action request. See para. 4.

¶12. (C) On 5/31, I met at his request with Senator Enrique Gonzalez Quintana (EGQ), President of UNACE (Gen. Lino Oviedo's Party) and Vice-President of the Senate. EGQ informed me that Venezuela's Ambassador to Paraguay had recently requested a meeting with UNACE party leader Gen. Oviedo. (Oviedo remains imprisoned, since his return to Paraguay in June 2004, for his involvement in a 1996 coup attempt.) EGQ noted that Venezuelan President Chavez will visit Paraguay at the end of June in connection to the upcoming MERCOSUR Summit; he understood that Venezuela sought a visit as a way to serve a bridge for better relations between Oviedo and the GOP.

¶13. (C) EGQ signaled Oviedo was disinclined to meet with the Venezuelan Ambassador. However, he advised that Oviedo had instructed him to solicit USG views on the matter. According to EGQ, Oviedo has every intention of becoming President of Paraguay. Given U.S. economic and political weight, he recognizes that he will need U.S. support to be successful. EGQ insisted that Oviedo would follow U.S. instructions on this matter. Comment. This is a common refrain from the Oviedistas, and usually they have supported the USG position on issues. End Comment. I told EGQ that I would need to seek instructions from Washington.

¶14. (C) Action request: Clearly Oviedo is trying to ingratiate himself with us. Unless Department instructs otherwise, I am prepared to go back to EGQ and advise him that upon consultation with Washington, the U.S. has decided to take no opinion on this matter, although as a personal comment I see nothing that Oviedo can gain from it.

¶15. (C) Comment. It is hard to guess what is behind this Venezuelan overture. Oviedo is in bad odor in most Paraguayan circles, particularly with Duarte Frutos and most of the Colorado party; the GOP will look dimly on a Venezuelan effort to serve as a go between. Oviedo's party is generally pro-U.S.; Oviedo himself has made favorable remarks about the U.S. in the press. Venezuela should know this but may seek to draw Oviedo into supporting "Bolivarian" initiatives. Chavez may also think he could strike with Oviedo some kind of populist chord or envisions Oviedo's return to power in a couple of years and wants to start building a bridge with him. Finally, it is worth noting the Venezuelan Ambassador here, Jose Huerta, has displayed irresponsible behavior at times; this could be another of his ill-considered acts. Even for Venezuela, however, this overture is a little difficult to understand. End Comment.
KEANE